



Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

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Academic integrity: All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

EL7003-8

Dr. Linda Collins

Instructional Design and Engaging E-Learning Activities

Activity # 4: Introductory Activities for Online Learners

Comments: A portion of the course overview section has been directly pulled from the course overview section from assignment 2.

Faculty Use Only

Hi, Michael, this is an excellent paper on instructional design for e-learning activities. You have taken a holistic approach to student learning and comprehension of concepts that addresses the needs of a variety of learning styles through the use of various learning strategies. I did notice you do not include in the paper how you will have students engage or how they will submit the assignments in the online

environment. You will want to consider this as you continue to develop your assignments and coursework. Your lessons are outlined in a way for students to understand expectations for each assignment including the pre and post assessments, tasks, and literacy strategies, nicely constructed. You include in your paper the important message that is not just getting the answer to the question, but understanding what the question is. Please see additional comments in the paper. Thanks, Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins 6.7 2.9 January 5, 2014

Online Learning Activities and Reflection

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Online Learning Activities and Reflection

Selecting lesson tasks to establish the necessary skills and information needed to participate in the online course experience is dependent upon two factors: the readiness of the learners and the appropriately selected activity. Presented with several options from which to implement, the challenge lies with creating tasks suitable for a diverse student population. Many learners will be experiencing this course for the first time while others will come with previous online learning experience. Focusing on literacy skills over three subject areas, that middle school learners are already familiar with, will help increase learner success regardless of their online learning experience. The following activities discussed in this paper have been adapted from those suggested by Horton (2010).

Course Overview

The goal of the overall course is to increase student achievement by practicing literacy skills throughout the content. At the conclusion of the literacy course students will have demonstrated stated learning objectives in the content areas of reading, math, and science. The literacy tasks developed for the course are designed primarily for middle school learners in sixth through eighth grade and are what Horton (2012) refers to as “Absorb” and “Do-type activities”. Prior to completing the first assignment task, learners, or e-learners as this term relates directly to the participation in an online course, will be required to complete a student online readiness survey adapted from the Louisiana Board of Regent’s Student Online Readiness Tool.

Learners will be required to use the literacy strategies, which will be the primary learning objectives to complete the content performance tasks. Each lesson will begin with a lesson introduction, followed by a pre-assessment, the learning task or tasks utilizing one or more literacy strategies, and finally a post-assessment. Student tasks will include images, video, and audio components, which will help reinforce student objectives and performance goals. Information and technology communication (ICT) resources such as discussion boards, email, Skype, Voice Thread, and other relevant educational related online applications will be used as teaching and learning tools to enhance and encourage student engagement. Course content will be provided on, or just below, grade level in order to decrease the variable that the learning content might be a distracting factor. Assessments created will evaluate students' application and use of the literacy learning objectives before, during, and after each lesson task. These assessments will use an exemplar rubric, created prior to a students' enrollment in the course to measure prior knowledge and student mastery of literacy goals and not the specific content being used to teach the literacy skills. Additionally, a short learner survey will be provided after each lesson task to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson's components and ICT applications

Student Readiness Survey

Student motivation and drive to succeed is often a good indicator of a student's potential success in an online course according to the Board of Regents of the University of Georgia (2003). The student readiness survey serves to help evaluate the learner's technology experience, study habits, personal and academic goals, and learning preferences. Researchers have found that online learning has six main topics closely related to a learner's success in an e-learning environment (Beffa-Negrini, Cohen, & Miller, 2002; Barr & Miller, 2013). To help evaluate a learner's readiness in an online course the Board of Regents of the University of

Georgia, with the help of Dr. Lynn Schrum (2001), has created the Student Online Readiness Tool (SORT) that will be used, with permission, before the start of this course. Each section of SORT has a brief description followed by a questionnaire. Based on the e-learner's responses, feedback will be delivered summarizing the e-learner's online readiness and providing suggested strategies for success and links to more information. In addition, the information in the questionnaire and feedback will help inform e-learners of the initial course assignment expectations. E-learners will have the opportunity to review the survey's findings in order to reflect on the appropriate adjustments and commitments they might make before officially enrolling in the online literacy course.

Reading Task

Once the student readiness survey has been completed the first of four literacy strategies will be introduced using reading as the first integrated subject task. Close reading is a literacy strategy that provides learners the opportunity to discover deeper meaning and comprehension from the **text**. This skill stresses reading complex text directly and thoroughly deriving meaning from the text methodically, deliberately encouraging learners to read and reread (Fisher & Frey, 2012). It also enables learners to understand the meanings of individual words, sentences, the order in which sentences unfold, and the development of ideas (PARCC, 2011; Fisher & Frey, 2012). If reading closely is the most effective way to achieve deeper comprehension of the text being read, regardless of content, then this must be one of the first literacy strategies taught in this course to accomplish the course and assignment goals and performance expectations.

With the above information in mind, the first introductory activity will ask e-learners to read an article in its entirety and identify vocabulary and ways the author uses language to create meaning. The performance outcomes here would be "What vocabulary words from the article

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Comment [1]: This is an important approach to get students engaged in learning the objectives of what they are reading.

did you have trouble understanding?” and “Define the vocabulary you had trouble understanding and provide an explanation for how the author’s word choices help you understand what you’ve read.” E-learners would then be asked to read a given portion of the article and determine the author’s purpose and main idea. At this point in the task e-learners would be given the body of the article, only, and asked to identify the author’s supporting details. Next, e-learners will be asked to consider the author’s conclusion and reflect on what the entire article causes the e-learner to think about.

The purpose of this task is to teach learners the close reading process, which requires learners to slowly read text in order to identify the meaning of individual words, sentences, and the development of the author’s ideas (Filkins, 2014). Often, learners will quickly read through the entire article, highlighting text here and there, focusing on just a few main points but never really grasping the author’s main purpose. This literacy strategy helps learners fully comprehend each part of an article by dissecting the parts of the article into more manageable and understandable pieces (Fisher & Frey, 2012).

Math Task

The second task introduces a comprehension strategy into a math task. Overall comprehension is a crucial goal of any mathematics word problem (Siena, 2009; Mudzielwana, 2013). Getting a word problem correct or solving a simple math equation correctly does not automatically assume the learner understands, comprehends, or has effectively mastered the problem. In order for the instructor to measure true mastery of a word problem or equation learners must learn to fully comprehend the math task and problem (Siena, 2009). It makes sense then to adopt literacy strategies and reading comprehension skills when teaching math in order to help learners fully develop and comprehend the task problem and questions.

This task will ask learners to read a math problem, first using the close reading strategy learned in the previous task and then to work through the math task utilizing two steps. The first step requires the e-learner to use a reading comprehension strategy that takes the learner through a process of comprehension that identifies what learners know and do not know about the problem. Learners will be guided through several mini tasks such as reading the entire problem, listing information and variables, defining units of measurement, and identifying key words necessary to help solve the problem. Finally, in the second step learners will be required to create a graphic organizer using the Frayer model to draw, label, and explain each step of the process in solving the mathematical problem.

The purpose of this task is to practice the close reading process and teach learners the process of mathematical comprehension not to actually solve the math problem presented. Learning how to solve a math problem is about knowing what to look for. Math problems often require an established set of procedures and knowing when to apply them. To identify these procedures, learners must be familiar with the problem situation by purposefully and deliberately reading for understanding (Siena, 2009). Close reading and reading for comprehension helps to identify important vocabulary, gather prior knowledge, gives the learner opportunities to ask questions, summarize information, and visualize relevant parts of the word problem (Siena, 2009; Mudzielwana, 2013). This process of understanding information helps increase text comprehension in many content areas including math.

Science Task

The third task requires learners to read a portion of an article that has been divided out amongst other e-learners participating in the course. The primary literacy strategy being taught in this task is literally embedded into the lesson activity and is considered a cooperative learning

task called jigsaw reading. The idea, created by Aronson in the early 1970's, is similar to a jigsaw puzzle in that pieces of a bigger whole are researched and learned by e-learners within specified groups. Then the information collected and learned by all groups of e-learners are put together in the form of a peer teaching performance outcome.

This task will require learners to work in small groups, depending on the number of enrolled learners, and become “experts” on a particular science topic. Each group member will be given a portion of the text to learn where each learner in the group will be required to actively participate in the research efforts. Learners will be encouraged to use the close reading and reading for comprehension strategies used in the previous two tasks during their comprehension of the reading they have been assigned. Once learners have completed this part of the task they will be asked to leave their groups to join “expert groups” where they will teach and present their assigned pieces of the content. Finally, the original groups of learners will come back together to teach each other what they have learned.

The benefit of a jigsaw activity is that it is an efficient way to learn information and share it with others (Aronson, 2014). The jigsaw process encourages learners to look and listen for details, understand the material at a deeper level, become more fluent in the use and meaning of discipline-based vocabulary, promotes discussion, problem-solving, and learning (Aronson, 2011). This embedded activity is a great way to practice the literacy skills described above because the activity itself embodies the literacy strategies learned throughout this course to complete the assignment task.

Assessing

Reflective writing has been seen as an “authentic” method of assessing what learners have mastered and understand (Mei-Mei & Mei-Chen, 2013). It allows learners to record, in

their own words, their thoughts, questions, ideas and conclusions of the stated learning/performance goals and expectations. Additionally, writing reflectively on the learning experience helps learners make associations between theory and practice, integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge and develop their own personal understanding of the concepts and materials (Reflective Writing, 2012). Reflective writing, in its own way, is also a literacy strategy, which helps put many literacy strategies to use in a structure of writing where learners develop critical thinking skills, identify important terminology, strengthen their understanding of the text, make connections across content and concepts, problem solve, and reflect on their own learning experience.

Conclusion

Two critical pieces of the original course design, described in a previous paper, have been reconsidered in this paper. Assessing student knowledge with a pre and post assessment and lesson surveys to be completed after each lesson task have been redesigned and will now be completed by learners at the end of the overall course. Although lesson surveys are very useful in the process of improving course content and design (Zint, 2012) and pre/post assessments are reliable performance indicators only one survey and assessment will be presented to learners at the end of the overall e-learning course. The lesson tasks found in this course have been designed to teach literacy strategies intended to improve reading fluency across the curriculum via an online learning environment.

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